

molds using liquid polyvinyl alcohol. Alternately, the cured (acetalized) polyvinyl alcohol foam may be dried and then ground or otherwise cut to the desired shape. Dry PVOH foam may also be cut with a laser, while wet foam can be cut with a water jet cutting system. While the nib of the instant invention can function well over a wide range of diameters and lengths, it was found that nibs which were in the range of about 0.25" long to about 0.75" long functioned particularly well when the corresponding relative diameters of the nib were in the range of approximately 0.050" in diameter to approximately .200" in diameter. A nib with a gradually tapered, concave form having a generally rounded tip was found to function best for general purpose decorating. Other nib shapes may be employed to produce special effects such as calligraphic writing and so forth.

FIG. 3 shows the device of the instant invention in use to decorate a frosted cookie. After removing cap 13 from decorating tool 10, nib 12 is brought into contact with, in this case, the surface of frosting base coat 17 on surface of cookie 16 whereby physical contact and capillary action between decorating fluid present on the surface of nib 12 and frosting base coat 17 cause the decorating fluid to be transferred to the surface of frosting base coat 17. The decorating tool 10 is maneuvered in a manner to keep nib 12 in contact with frosting base coat 17 wherever it is desired to impart decorating fluid to the surface of the food. This is an easy task with the instant invention because the highly flexible nib will flex and bend upon contact even with fresh frosting or other very soft surfaces as well

as hard surfaces. This flexing action permits the nib to remain in contact with the food surface even if the user's hand is somewhat unsteady or the surface of the food is relatively uneven. The indicia 18 is created by application of the decorating fluid to the food. While the nib design illustrated in FIG. 1 is of a tapered, concave shape, it is envisioned that the nib could also take the form of any other desired shape. Indeed, a portion of the nib may be preformed into a specific shape such as a star or heart so that an image of the desired shape may be imprinted on the food item each time the face of the nib is brought into contact with the food surface.

Testing has shown that the device of the instant invention is highly effective for decorating both hard and soft foods and other surfaces. It is to be understood that the embodiment and methods described herein are exemplary and that other means to accomplish the purpose of the instant invention are anticipated. The dispensing and decorating properties of the instant invention are not limited to applying colors but may also include flavors and fragrances.